The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S. Criticizes Meat Import Ban

By The Moscow Times

February 02, 2013



The United States on Friday strongly objected to Russia's decision to ban all imports of U.S. beef and pork because it could have traces of the feed additive ractopamine, a growth stimulant to make meat leaner.

"These actions threaten to undermine our bilateral trade relationship," said Andrea Mead, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Trade Representative's office. "They are not consistent with international standards and appear to be inconsistent with Russia's World Trade Organization commitments."

Russia's Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service said in a statement that it would impose a temporary ban on U.S. beef and pork starting Feb. 11.

The move has been in progress for weeks and appears as one of several tit-for-tat moves taken by Moscow since the U.S. Congress passed legislation in December to punish Russian human rights violators.

Ractopamine is banned in some countries because of concerns that residues could remain in the meat and cause health problems, despite scientific evidence it is safe.

“We ... continue to call on Russia to suspend these unjustified measures and restore market access for U.S. beef and pork products,” Mead said.

Russia got 7.5 percent of its imported beef and 11.4 percent of its imported pork from the United States from January to September 2012.

“Although Russia is not the largest export market for U.S. beef and pork, it’s a very valuable export market,” said Gary Mickelson, spokesman for Tyson Foods, the largest U.S. meat company.

“We’d rather not speculate about a halt in business to Russia, but we’re hopeful the U.S. and Russian government can quickly resolve this matter,” Mickelson said.

Russia’s chief health inspector, Gennady Onishchenko, said the ban would be long-term. “It will be in effect for an indefinite period until they prove that it’s safe,” Onishchenko told Interfax on Thursday. “Our scientists have conducted experiments, including those using the findings of European studies. There is not enough scientific evidence for us to consider ractopamine absolutely safe for people’s health. We will follow this line.”

The Federal Veterinary and Phytosanitary Inspection Service does not rule out that in the foreseeable future the right to supply meat and meat products to Russia will be enjoyed only by U.S. companies that export their products to the European Union.

“[The watchdog] is considering harmonizing the [Russian] list of suppliers from the U.S. with the EU list of suppliers, which could significantly reduce the number of meat producers exporting their products to the Russian Federation,” the head of the agency’s department for international relations, Artyom Dayushev, told Interfax.

In Tyson’s fiscal 2012 (October — September), Russia accounted for 9 percent of the company’s $1.1 billion in international pork sales. The company’s latest fact book did not have a figure for its beef sales to Russia.

(Reuters, MT)

Related articles:

- U.S. Meat Banned
- Obama Won't Go Out of His Way to Please Russia
- Moscow Nixes U.S. Anti-Crime Agreement

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2013/02/02/us-criticizes-meat-import-ban-a21189